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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

NIC 01919-86
15 April 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: A Successor to Qadhafi

1. US action against Libya yesterday suggests that we are likely to have to carry out further air strikes against Libya in the future-- principally because Qadhafi is not going to lay off. Ultimately this may well lead to Qadhafi's overthrow domestically.

2. The Assumption: Up to now we have generally assumed that, whoever follows Qadhafi, we are almost surely going to be better off than we are now. Yet there could be something worse than Qadhafi: a dedicated disciplined pro-Soviet or Marxist leader who could ultimately put Libya more clearly into the Soviet column.

-- Obviously we have no control over the Libyan succession. But the Soviets have a good bit more opportunity to influence this succession given the large Soviet and East German presence in the Libyan security services. In the final analysis, however, I have some confidence that a pro-Soviet figure is unlikely to emerge supreme.

3. The Arab Element: The only Marxist-Leninist regime in the Arab world is the PDRY--a country which had a long tradition of radical political party activism before a Marxist party seized power. There is no such party in Libya nor are we aware of even the germ of such an organization. The Arab factor is likely to be the strongest in a Libyan succession.

-- A successor regime to Qadhafi will most likely follow traditional Arab nationalist patterns--which may not be congenial but one we can probably live with. Iraq or Algeria in the 70's might be the model.

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4. The Next Libyan Regime: If Qadhafi falls under the pressures of US military attack, his successors will surely distance themselves from the US. It will destroy the credibility of any successor regime to be perceived as the beneficiary of US military action or the creature of the US. Such a leader will denounce the US attacks against Libya, but will also denounce Qadhafi's rule of the country for nearly 20 years. He will condemn Qadhafi's profligate waste of Libyan resources and will want to end the political isolation which his policies brought to Libya. He will assert his credentials in the name of Arab unity against common external enemies. He will provide at least lip service to the Palestinian cause. He will probably seek to improve relations with all states in the Arab world and avoid gratuitous meddling beyond the Arab world. He will view contiguous countries as legitimate areas for Libyan political interests: Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Egypt. This does not necessarily mean such a leader will actively seek to install pro-Libyan governments there but will remain actively interested in political developments there. Northern Chad in particular will probably be a permanent part of the Libyan Lebensraum.

- Such a leader will inevitably depend on the Soviet Union as an important source of arms. The chances are, however, that a successor will not wish to maintain the same incredible stockpile of Soviet weapons rusting away in the Libya desert. The USSR will view the arms relationship as a major foot in the door in Tripoli, but will probably be hard put to exert major influence over the new regime--in the same way that it has never adequately exercised significant voice in Algeria, Iraq, or possibly even in Syria.

5. Any such predictions are especially hard to make because Libya has no track record in international politics except under a doddering old King and a Qadhafi. We know little about how a Libya behaves in this world--and Qadhafi unfortunately may even have helped create the character of modern Libya.

- In short, we cannot be entirely certain that Qadhafi's fall will be all to the good. Such transition could provide openings for a more pro-Soviet figure, but the odds are that it will not. The next Libyan regime will necessarily not be to our liking, but will more likely follow at least Arab norms of international behavior in pursuing its regional policies.

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